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REFLECTIONS

UPON

Our LATE and PRESENT

PROCEEDINGS

IN

ENGLAND



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REFLECTIONS *upon our Late and Present* Proceedings in ENGLAND.

TH O' no Man wishes better to the *Protestant Religion* in general, and the *Church of England* in particular, than I do; yet I cannot prevail with my self to approve all these Methods, or follow all these Measures, which some Men propose as the only Security both of the one and the other.

Never perhaps was there a more proper time, wherein to secure our Religion (together with our Civil Liberties) than now offers it self; if we have but the Skill and Honesty rightly to improve this critical Opportunity; but if we shall either let it slip, or abuse it, we may, in vain, hereafter wish that we had been wise in time, and have cause to repent of our Error, when it will be too late to correct it.

What we do now, will transmit its good or ill effects to after-Ages; and our Children yet unborn, will in all probability, be happy or miserable, as we shall behave our selves in this great *Conjuncture*. They are likely to enjoy their Religion, Laws and Liberties, according to the old *English* Standart, if we shall now take the right course to secure them.

But if we do engage in wrong Counsels, and build upon false foundations, in stead of a Blessing we leave a Curse to our Posterity, and entail upon them Popery, Slavery, Arbitrary Power, and all the miserable Consequences of a divided Kingdom, which (as sure as the word of God is true) *can never stand*.

Let us not therefore be too hasty, but pause a while, let us make a stop, look about us, and consider, 1. What we have done. 2. With what intent we did it. 3. What it is that some men would be at: and 4. Whether we can in Honour and Conscience joine with them in the Design now in hand.

I shall confine my self to these Heads: But here before I enter upon any of them, I shall take it for granted, that the Prince of *Orange* hath done a great thing for us, and (under God) hath wrought such a Deliverance for the Nation, as ought never to be forgotten, and can never be sufficiently requited. He must be mentioned with Honour and Gratitude, so long as the Protestant Name shall be remembered: He came not as the ancient *Romans* and *Saxons*, to conquer, and lead in triumph after him our Religion and Laws, our Lives and Liberties, but to defend, preserve and secure us in them all. To this end he undertook this dangerous and chargeable Expedition, which hath hitherto proved as much to our Advantage, as it will be to his lasting Reputation: What he hath done argues, that he is moved by an higher Principle than any this World affords, and can overlook his own Ease and Security, when the publick Good, and the concerns of Christianity requires his seasonable assistance. I could easily make a panegyrick upon his Vertues, and equal him to the most famous *Grecian* or *Roman* Captains; but I need not set forth his Praise, which do so loudly, and yet so silently speak for themselves. I need not draw any tedious Parallels betwixt his *Highness* and the *Worshies* of other Ages, since I am, I question not, herein prevented by all who hath read the History of former times, and are witnesses of what he (with so much Courage, Mildness, and Prudence) hath done in this.

1. Things prospered so well under his Conduct, that all of us were ready to submit our selves to his Direction, and come under his protection, as the *Tutelar Genius of the Nation*. The effects of his enterprize hath been so strange, so wonderful and surprizing, that had we not seen, we should scarce have believed them.

As soon as the Prince was landed, with what Joy and universal good Wishes was the News received? How forward were all sorts of People to declare for his Highness? How willing were they to lend him an helping hand for the accomplishing his great Work? How did we all generally concur and unanimously agree to forget our Obligations to our Sovereign, and assist the Prince, rather than the King against our selves, and his own true Interest.

Nay, the Army it self soon began to go over, choosing rather to lye under the imputation of Cowardise and Disloyalty (which yet a *true English-Man* had rather dye than really deserve) than to be Instrumental in enslaving their *Native Country*, and bringing it again under the *Papal Yoke*.

In short all orders of Men, Ecclesiastical, Civil and Military, had their eyes fixed upon the Prince of *Orange*, as their Common Deliverer, were resolv'd to espouse his Cause; and accordingly (after the King was withdrawn) did put the *Regal Administration* into his hands.

2. So far we have gone; this we have done; and we hope that (the Case being extraordinary and Necessity giving a dispensation) the intent of our proceeding, will at last excuse, if not justify us, if we have not kept our selves within the *Common Laws* of action.

For, let every Man lay his hand upon his Heart, and seriously ask himself, for what reason, and with what intent he became a Party in this general Defection? was it utterly to ruine the King and subvert the Government? Was it because he was displeased with the ancient Constitution, and had a mind to mould and fashion it to his liking? Was it because he had an intent to shake off the Government (that *easy, equal, and well poised, and never enough to be commended Government*, as King CHARLES I. calls it) of the *English Nation*? Was it any honest Man's meaning to subvert this Government, to make way for his own Dreams of some *Poetical Golden Age*, or a *Fanciful Millenium*.

Was it (let me ask again) to divest the King of all Power to Protect his Subjects, and then to pronounce roundly, that all the bonds of Allegiance to him are dissolved? Was the end of our uniting together, to bind his Hands, and then prick this Doctrine upon the points of our Swords: *Protection and Allegiance are Duties so reciprocal, that where the one fails wholly, the other falls with it*. Was it to frighten the King out of his Dominions, and then to vote that he hath *Abdicated* his Government? Was this the intent, and were these the Reasons of our Declaring for the Prince of *Orange*? No certainly; what ever some obnoxious and ambitious Men might aim at, all good Christians and worthy Patriots had other intentions, and were led on by other Motives.

They were sensibly concerned for the preservation of their Holy Religion, in the first place; their Lives, their Laws, and Liberties in the next. *After the way, which some call Heresie*, so were they desirous still to worship the God of their Fathers: And after that manner which some might say was *Rebellion*, so they thought themselves oblig'd to stand up for the *Laws and Liberties of their Forefathers*.

For these Ends, and for bringing about these worthy Purposes, they withdrew themselves from the Kings personal Service, that they might be the better enabled to serve his real Interest. They hoped by this means to deliver him from his evil Counsellors, and secure both him and his Subjects from the evil and pernicious Practices of some *wicked and unreasonable Men*.

3. These and such like were the Inducements which prevailed with all well affected and honest Men, to withdraw from his Majesty and suspend the Actual exercise of their Allegiance for the present, that they might afterwards exert it according to the fix'd and stated Rules of Law, Conscience, and right Reason.

But now, how contrary is this to those New Models, which some politick Architects are proposing to, or rather imposing upon the Nation? What is it they would be at? And what are the Ends they are driving on? Are they just and good? Are they generous and honourable? Or are they not rather such as would undermine the Government both in Church and State.

and reduce us to a state of Nature, wherein the People are at liberty to agree upon any Government, or none at all?

Plainly they would reduce us to the *Dutch*, or some other foreign Measures (which how well soever they might agree with that Country, where they are settled and confirmed, partly by Custom, and partly by the peculiar Necessity of their Affairs) can never be well received in *England*, till an Act be passed to abolish Monarchy, Episcopacy, and all the fundamental Laws establish'd by *Magna Charta*, and all succeeding Parliaments ever since.

The Enquiry into the Measures of Submission to the Supreme Authority is a Treatise calculated for the Times; but surely it is not Written according to the Principles and Practice of the Church of *England*, in the time of the Renowned *Queen Elizabeth*: I am apt to think, that some regard was then had to the Passages which we find in the Scriptures (especially the Old Testament) relating to the *Measures of Submission*. But these Examples weigh nothing with our Author, because they are not for his purpose, pag. 5, 6. I am also apt to suspect that *Queen Elizabeth* would not have thanked any Politician for vending this as a certain and fundamental Principle, *That in all disputes between Power and Liberty, Power must always be proved, but Liberty proves it self, the one being founded only upon a positive Law, and the other upon the Law of Nature*, page. 4. She, I perswade myself, on the contrary, would have challenged any such Statesman to have prov'd his *Liberty*; as for her *Power* (she would have answered) it was ready to prove it self against all who should presume to question it. But what's the meaning of *Power being founded only on a positive Law, and Liberty upon the Law of Nature*? Is not a Father's power founded (as he grants) upon the Law of Nature? and is not all Power, even of the greatest Princes, (as far as it is just and Honest, and for the benefit of the Subject) derived from this *Paternal Authority* of the Father over his Son, besides doth not the *Law of Nature* prescribe the necessity of puring *Power* into the hands of one or more for the benefit of the whole, which otherwise would be in danger of destroying it self by intestine Divisions? in short, if *Liberty* be founded upon the *Law of Nature*, so is all just and Lawful *Power*, since the end of it is only to regulate our liberty, and in truth to make us more free. *Liberty* in general is a right to use our Faculties according to right Reason; and the Law in Particular tells us which are these Rules of right Reason by which we must govern our selves. And what is Law, but the Commands of the Supreme Power (where ever it is lodg'd, in the hands of the Prince, the Senate, or the People, or of all of them together) ordering what we are to do, or avoid, under the sanction of particular Penalties?

I beg the Learned Author's Pardon for questioning his *Measures*: in my judgment they are not taken from the *English Standard*, and therefore, I hope, I may without offence use my *Liberty* in refusing them (a right which proves it self) till he can prove his *Power* to impose them.

The Enquiry into the present State of Affairs, is a discourse which seems (by its bold strokes) to resemble the former. I will say no more of it but this, If what he there lays down for a certain truth be really so, then all that follows must be granted as reasonable Deductions from this fundamental Principle: but if this be false, all that he hath said falls to the ground, for want of a firm and solid Foundation to support it.

Now the position, which (like a first Principle in Mathematicks) he takes for granted, is this, *It is certain* (says he, pag. 1:) *that the reciprocal Duties in Civil Societies are Protection and Allegiance, and wheresoever the one fails wholly the other falls with it.* This is his Doctrine which I have mentioned before; but shall now consider a little more particularly.

'Tis indeed most fit and reasonable, that *Protection* and *Allegiance* should always go together, and accompany one another; but that they do not do so, is but too plain in the present case of *England*: but doth it follow, that because the King is not in a capacity to protect his Subjects, therefore he is no longer to be look'd upon as a King? And if he be a King, doth

doth not this suppose that he hath some Subjects? And if so, I would gladly know what kind of Subjects they are who owe no Allegiance?

But let this question be rul'd by his own Instance, *The duty betwixt Father and Son*. Suppose my Father to be so destitute that he cannot, and so perverse, that he will not protect and sustain me, suppose him as Churlish as *Cain*, and as poor as *Job*; yet still he is my Father, and I am his Son? that is, he still retains all that Power which (by the Law of Nature) a Father ought to have over his Child: still the Relation holds betwixt us, and whilst it doth so, the Fathers faults or necessities cannot evacuate the Duty of a Son; which is founded not in the Fathers *good Will or Abilities* to defend him (though it must be confes'd they are chiefly consider'd) but in that *fix'd and immutable Relation* which God and Nature hath established betwixt them, not to be dissolved but by Death. So that if this Learned Author will yield, (as he seems to do) that *Kingly Power* is nothing else but the *Paternal* consign'd, (by the common consent of the Father of Families to one Person, upon such and such conditions, (specified in the contract;)) I cannot see how this Relation betwixt King and Subject, can any more be utterly dissolved, than that betwixt a Father and a Son.

I shall say no more to this Discourse; and if what I have already said do offend either against the Principles of Reason, or the Law of England, I am willing to be corrected, and acknowledge my Error.

There is another little Paper which yet gives such a great stroke to the Government, that it ought not to be pass'd over without some Animadversion. The Sheet which I mean is, that which is call'd *Advice before it be too late*, or, *A Breviate for the Convention*. This Paper bespeaks its Author to be of the same Complexion and Principles with him who writ *The Word to the Wise*; and *The four Questions debated*. They do all of 'em suppose, that the Government is *fall'n to its Centre, or Root from whence it sprang*, that is, to the People, (as the word to the Wise expresses our present case.) I know not what can be a more effectual Answer to these Pamphlets, and take away the Foundation upon which they argue, than that Maxim in our Law, received by all honest and learned Lawyers, *The King of England never dies*. For if so, how is the Government laps'd? And if it be not laps'd, how can the Throne be said to be vacant? And if the Throne be not vacant, we are still a Body Politick, (consisting of Head and Members) though much distemper'd and out of order, by reason of the Infirmities of the Head. We still live, though we are not in good health; and our Case doth not require the Sexton to make our Grave, but calls for the Physician to apply proper Remedies to cure our Disease. If the King can die, 'tis such a defect in our Government as doth strangely disparage it, and farther supposes, that (which hitherto we are all to learn) the Crown is not Successive.

Now if it be successive, it cannot be disposed of by the *Will of the People*, but only by the *Will of God*, who in that very moment calls the lawful Ruler to the Crown; wherein he is pleased to put a period to the life of his Predecessor. If it be said that the Voice of the People is the Voice of God, I believe that (should this be granted) it will not do their business; for I doubt not, but that if the Pole was taken, and the Question put to all People who are of Years of Discretion; the Answer would be, That they have still a King, and that they are as willing to keep him as they are desirous to exclude Popery for ever, that which hath made both him and them so unhappy. This, I do not much question, would be the Answer, if we should appeal to the sense of the People in general; who yet (if the Government be fall'n to them) must be allowed to have a Right of Suffrage, and a liberty to speak their Minds as freely as other Commoners in this great Convention.

Farther still, If the King never dies by our Law, How can he be lawfully depos'd? For by Deposition the Throne Necessarily becomes void for some time. There must be some Interstice; some space of time, before they who depos'd a King can set up another; and till the King in Designation be actually invested with the Regal Office, there must of necessity be an *Inter-regnum*; that is, *The King* (contrary to the mind of our Law) *may dye*.

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The Government of *England* always supposes a *Monarch regulated by Law* and therefore 'tis presumed that he *can do no wrong*; that is, Though he may err, as well as other Mortals, yet the *Law* of which he is the Guardian, brings no Accusation against him, but only against his evil Ministers. If therefore the King hath err'd, (as doubtless he hath very much) in God's Name let his Ministers be called to an account; but why must the Government be dissolved, and the King arraign'd, condemn'd and depos'd, to make way for any new Scheme of Government whatsoever, whether *French, Italian, or Dutch*?

Our History indeed affords two Examples since *William* the First's time; that of *Edward* the Second, and the other of *Richard* the Second: but they did both of them actually resign; and besides, what they did, or was done to them, ought to preclude the Right of no succeeding Prince. These examples ought no more to be urged than the Stabbing King *Henry* the fourth of *France*, or the Murdering King *CHARLES* the First of *England*.

The Historian, in the Life of *Richard* the Second, gives no very good Character of that Parliament, that pass'd the Vote for his deposition: *The Noblemen* (says he) *partly corrupted by Favour, partly aw'd by Fear, gave their Voices*; and the *Commons* (commonly are like a flock of Crans) as the first fly, all the followers do the like. Continuat. Dan. Hist. p. 46.

Let it be here observed, that I do not dispute whether the King, together with his Parliament, may not regulate and entail the Succession, as shall by them be thought fit; but only whether, whilst the King lives, the Throne can be vacant, and the Government be truly said to be laps'd? This we deny: But however, supposing these things may be so, who can make to fair a claim (and so generally satisfactory to the People) as the next Heir by proximity of Blood I mean (if the Prince of *Wales* be proved supposititious) that incomparable Lady, the Princess of *Orange*?

These Reflections I have thought fit to make upon some new Notions of our present Statesmen, by which we guess what they would be at. In my opinion, I think it is but too evident, that they are taking a dvantage of our present Fears and Distractions, to run us into these extremes which the State (as well as the Church) of *England*, hath always carefully avoided, and taken particular care to provide against.

4. In this Design can we in Honour and Conscience go along with them; whom yet we cannot but highly esteem and value for their Learning and Parts, and more especially for their happy and successful Labours, in rescuing us from these gross Corruptions of Christian Religion, and Human Nature, Popery, and Slavery?

But shall we run into Popery, and perhaps Slavery too, when we have been so long striving against both, and are now (thanks be to God) in a great measure freed from the Danger of either? And is not the Deposing a Popish Doctrin? And is it not as Antichristian for any Assembly to put it into practice, as it was for the Council of *Lateran* at first to establish it?

And as for Slavery, must not a standing Army be necessarily kept up, to Maintain a Title founded only upon the consent of the fickle and uncertain People (granting that the major part of them are willing?) And in such a Case must we not be beholden to the Goodness of the Prince, rather than the Protection of our Laws, if an Arbitrary and Despotick Power be not again introduced.

We have, as yet, no Law which wholly disables and excludes a Popish Successor from the Throne; and till we have one (which I question not but we shall have soon) I do not see how we can disanul the King's Title, or vacate his *Regal Capacity*, howsoever his Power may be restrained. Innovations without former precedent, are always dangerous, especially these of this nature. It will be much more wise, as well as safe, to bear with some Inconveniences, than bring upon our selves these Mischiefs, which such unparallel'd Proceedings may produce.

The Prince of *Orange* in his additional Declaration hath these Words: *We are confident, that no Persons can have such hard thoughts of us, as to imagine that we have any other Design in this undertaking, than to procure a settlement of Religion, and of the Liberties and properties of the Subjects*

Subjects upon so sure a Foundation, that there may be no danger of the Nation's relapsing into the like Miseries at any time hereafter.

How far some Persons may extend this Clause (*That there may be no danger of the Nation's relapsing into the like Miseries for the future*) I cannot tell; but for any one to understand it so; as it his Highness meant, that there could be no security against the *Nations Relapse*, if the King be not deposed, and he himself put into possession of the Throne, is (I am sure) an Interpretation very disadvantageous to his Honour, and looks more like a Jesuitical Equivocation, than that Candor and Christian Sincerity, which hath brightned and rendred Illustrious all the Actions of his Highness, both at home and abroad.

The Answerer also to the Reflector upon his Highness's Declaration, will not permit us to harbour any such Suspicions, as if a Crown was the End of his Expedition. *All such* (says he, pag. 23. 24.) *as believe the Prince of Orange has brought this Army, and intends to make War upon England, and subdue it to his own Will and Pleasure, trample all Laws both divine and human under feet, dethrone his present Majesty, and make himself King; they will stay and fight for him (sc. the King) or at least to the best of their power, in some manner assist and help him: On the contrary, such as believe that the Prince's meaning is nothing of all this, &c.*

Here, you see, that this Author (who, 'tis to be supposed, was not unacquainted with the Prince's intentions) utterly rejects it, as a false imputation, that his Highness came to *dethrone his present Majesty, and make himself King*. Nay, he thought himself obliged so fully to declare against this scandalous Report, that he seems to have encouraged all those who believed it, *To stay and fight for the King; or at least, to the best of their power, in some manner assist and help him*. So farr was this Gentleman from entertaining any such thoughts of the Prince's Expedition, which some Men, nevertheless, do now so industriously labour to make the effect of it.

There is another thing which makes well meaning Men apt to suspect the present management, and with holds them from closing with it so fully, as otherways, its probable they might do. That Paper which goes under the Title of the *Prince's third Declaration*, is (as I am credibly informed) none of his, and is disowned by the Prince himself. Now this pretended Declaration (coming out when the Army was in such a dubious Condition and fluctuating betwixt the King and the Prince) did more harm to the Kings Affairs, than all the other Papers (I believe) published at that time.

And if this was no real, but a sham-Declaration, and yet was permitted without Contradiction; 'tis plain that Sophistry and Tricks are made use of, as Lawful Policies, and that any kind of means are permitted, if they will but do the business, and serve the present turn: This makes plain and honest Men, who have no Ends to serve, but what are just, and are willing to use no kind of Means but what are so: This makes them shie and cautious of engaging too farr in these Designs, which they see carried on by crafty and deceitful Artifices; working under a Military Power and Force ready to defend them.

I might mention the great number of Papists in the Dutch Army, as another distwafive from venturing our selves in this bottom: We are afraid of Papists of all sorts and of all Countries, German and Dutch as well as French and Irish, the Constitutions of the one may be more harmless than that of the other; but the Principles of both (we know) are equally destructive; and when occasion serves, who knows but that the Principle may prevail over the Constitution, and the Papist get the better of the Dutch Man? 'Tis ill trusting Popery in any shape: This is a Root, which where ever it is planted, can bring forth no good Fruit. The Bogs of Holland cannot (we think) make it less malignant, than these of Ireland.

To come to a conclusion, there remain several things to be cleared, before we can altogether comply with what is now prosecuted with so much Zeal.

That the Prince of W. is a supposititious Child: That a League was made by our King with the King of France for the destruction of his Protestant Subjects, and rooting out our Religion, under the Notion of the Northern Herefie: That the late King was Poisoned; and that the Earle of Essex

was murdered. These things, we desire, may be proved; and then we cannot but agree, that nothing can be too bad for the guilty Authors.

These are such damnable Villanies, such horrid Crimes, that both the Principals and Accessories ought to be esteemed, and treated no better than *Tories* and *Randiti*, Men of scared and profligate Consciences, forsaken of God, and Enemies to Mankind.

But then seeing these are such heavy Accusations and grievous Charges, they ought certainly to be well proved before they be believed, and produced as Arguments against the Life, Honour, and Estate of any Person: for *si satis esset accusasse*, &c. If it be enough to accuse, where should we find an Innocent Person?

If these dreadful things can be made out, it would, I believe, not only confirm Protestants in their deserved Detestation of Popery, but create even in the minds of honest Papists themselves, an Aversion to their own Religion, when they shall see it contriving and executing such cruel and unnatural *Works of darkness*.

To see a Father setting up a pretended Son against the Interest of his own undoubted Children; to behold a King bargaining for the Destruction of his own Subjects; to represent to our Minds, one Brother preparing the deadly Cup for the other, who yet venter'd his Crown rather than he would Exclude him from the hopes of it in Reversion, to look upon the same Royal Person plotting, and managing the Assassination of a Captive and helpless Peer: These are such dismal Sights, and melancholick Scenes, so full of Horror and barbarous Cruelty, that they must needs make sad Impressions upon the Hearts even of the boldest Spectators; insomuch, that if they were proved, they would most effectually prejudice all Men against the Author of such monstrous Barbarities, and go near to extinguish all Obligations of Duty, which otherways they might owe to His Person and Authority.

We must therefore call again for the proof of these things, or else we cannot (because we ought not to) believe them upon bare Surmise and Hear-say. If these Accusations be cleared once, who can reverence the Person guilty of them, as the Father of his Country, and not rather avoid and fly from him as the worst of Tyrants?

But if these things be still kept in the Clouds, and wrap'd up in uncertain Ambiguities, all wise Men will think that it would have been better, if they never had been mentioned; because this doth but raise the Peoples Zeal for the present, which (if not kept up by real evidence) will be apt to turn to the other extreme, and commiserate the Cause which before it prosecuted with so much violence. The higher Men's Resentments are raised by objecting the most notorious Crimes, the lower will they fall, if Truth and plain matter of fact doth not back and maintain them. And this is an advantage which I would not have us give our Adversaries in these things, no more than we have done in the matters of Dispute betwixt them and us. Here we have proved all our Charges against their Religion; let us therefore prove, or else not so eagerly insist upon, these Accusations brought against their Persons.

I shall add nothing farther, but my real Wishes, That I could (though with the loss of all that's dear to me in this World) contribute to the utter Exclusion of *POPERY* by all lawful means; and I do, and shall always pray for a Blessing upon their Designs, who sincerely endeavour to procure a Settlement of the Religion, Liberties and Properties of the Subjects, upon so sure a foundation, that there may be no danger of the Nations relapsing into the like miseries at any time hereafter.

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